

Counting Religion in Britain

A Monthly Round-Up of New Statistical Sources

Number 27 – December 2017

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OPINION POLLS

Perils of perception

The latest Ipsos global *Perils of Perception* survey again sought to quantify the public's perception of facts and compare it with the reality (as established by a variety of verified sources). The study was conducted in 38 countries between 28 September and 19 October 2017 by means of interviews (mostly online) with 29,133 adults aged 16/18-64, including approximately 1,000 in Britain. This year, respondents in each country were asked how many of their compatriots they thought said they believed in heaven, hell, or God. The British sample consistently overestimated what the answers might have been. In other words, interviewees assessed other Britons as being more religious than they actually claimed to be. This was particularly the case in respect of hell, in which nearly twice as many people were thought to believe as did so (38% versus 21%). The divergence was least for belief in God where the average guess was 43% against a reality of 39%, while for belief in heaven it was 45% versus 32%. Topline results only are available at:

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perils-perception-2017>

Importance of religion

The relative insignificance of religion to UK citizens, and most other Europeans for that matter, was actually revealed in another contemporaneous survey, Wave 88.3 of the European Commission's Eurobarometer, face-to-face fieldwork for which was conducted with 1,334 adults aged 15 and over in the UK by TNS UK on 5-14 November 2017. Asked to select from a list of twelve values the three which were most important to them personally, just 5% in the UK chose religion, one point less than the European Union mean. Peace was the most highly-prized (by 41%) value in the UK, closely followed by respect for human life and human rights on 40% each. Topline results only are available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2143>

Knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ

To mark the UK launch of its mini-series *Robert Powell on the Real Jesus of Nazareth*, the History Channel commissioned OnePoll to conduct an online survey of 2,000 UK adults about their knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ. Although more than seven in ten reckoned they had a good grasp of the Christmas story, quite a few were ignorant of some of the specifics, including one-fifth who did not think Jesus was born on Christmas Day. If anything, there were even more gaps in respondents' knowledge of His later life, one-fifth unaware that He had twelve disciples, three-fifths that Maundy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper, and one-

quarter that Good Friday witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus. Just three in ten admitted that their knowledge of the life of Jesus derived from reading the Bible.

As with so many OnePoll studies, the full data tables from this survey are unlikely to enter the public domain, while media reporting of the headline results has been relatively unsystematic. The History Channel has a brief news release at:

<http://www.history.co.uk/shows/robert-powell-the-real-jesus-of-nazareth/articles/survey-suggests-brits-dont-know-jesus>

A little more detail can be found in *The Independent*'s reporting at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/christmas-jesus-christ-birthday-25-december-brits-ignorant-nativity-christianity-bethlehem-a8094496.html>

Christmas carols

Almost three-quarters of Britons claim to like Christmas carols, according to an app-based poll by YouGov published on 20 December 2017. A plurality (45%) said they enjoyed both singing and listening to carols, while a further 22% liked to listen to them and 6% to sing them. Approximately one-fifth (22%) neither enjoyed listening to nor singing carols and 5% were unsure of their preference. Topline data only are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/12/20/jobs-prisoners-how-many-sprouts-make-portion-chris/>

Meanwhile, Classic FM's annual listeners' poll of 'The Nation's Favourite Carol' for 2017 revealed it to be *O Holy Night*, with *Silent Night* and *In the Bleak Mid-Winter* (Gustav Holst version) in second and third places, respectively. The top 30 listing is at:

<http://win.classicfm.com/nations-favourite-carol/>

Christmas cards

A *Mail on Sunday* survey of more than 580 Christmas cards from two leading greetings card producers, Hallmark and Card Factory, found only seven with a Nativity theme. And of the branches of Waitrose, Tesco, Marks and Spencer, and Waterstones which were visited by the newspaper's investigators, none was selling cards depicting the Nativity. The story is told in:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5209287/Only-one-80-Christmas-cards-shows-Nativity.html>

Religion and politics

Most Britons consider that religion and politics belong to separate spheres, according to an online poll of almost 1,700 adults conducted by YouGov for *The Times* in December 2017, and reported in the Christmas Day online only edition of the newspaper. Asked whether politicians should feel free to use their religious beliefs to inform their political decisions, just 14% agreed, while 65% wanted politicians to keep their religious views out of their politics, with 21% undecided. Respondents were similarly unenthusiastic about the presence of clerics in the House of Lords, 62% saying that none should have an automatic right to a seat in the chamber;

a mere 8% supported the continuation of the current arrangement of seats for 26 Church of England bishops alone, a further 12% thinking other faith leaders should sit alongside them, and 18% being unsure. *The Times* also took the opportunity to add a couple of more general religious questions, about belief in God (36% being disbelievers and 29% believers, with a further 23% believing in some sort of spiritual greater power) and intentions to attend a Christmas service (20% saying they had plans to do so). No data tables are available as yet but the newspaper's report can be found at:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/public-want-religion-kept-out-of-politics-t3rk055cx>

Entrance fees for places of worship

News that the Pantheon, a church which is one of Rome's most celebrated tourist attractions, is to start charging visitors for admission prompted YouGov to ask, in an app-based poll published on 14 December 2017, whether it is acceptable to levy an entrance fee to places of worship. One-quarter of respondents deemed it inappropriate to charge at all, but the majority (57%) considered it acceptable to make tourists pay (albeit not worshippers) and a further 16% to charge everybody. Topline data only are available at:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/12/14/charging-entrance-fee-places-worship-smoking-ban/>

Pope Francis

'Global Leaders' was the theme of the Gallup International Association's 41st Annual Global End of Year Survey, Pope Francis being one of 12 leaders whom respondents were asked to rate. Fieldwork was conducted in 55 countries, including in the UK, where 1,004 adults aged 18 and over were interviewed online by ORB International on 4-11 December 2017. Across the world in the aggregate, 56% viewed Pope Francis favourably and 18% unfavourably, giving a net score of +38%, which was larger than obtained by any of the other world leaders covered by the survey, all of whom were prime ministers or heads of state. In the UK, this net score for the Pope was somewhat lower, at +32%, the product of a 57% favourable and 25% unfavourable opinion. Although the UK was positioned 26th= for favourability towards the Pope, it came as high as 8th= for unfavourable attitudes, which were mainly worse in nations with large Muslim populations. Topline results only are available at:

http://www.gallup-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017_Global-Leaders.pdf

Muslim experiences

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has recently released several reports on the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II), which was conducted by Ipsos MORI in 2015-16. One of the reports concerns the experience of discrimination by Muslim minorities in 15 European Union countries, including the UK, where 710 self-identifying Muslim adults who were immigrants or descendants of immigrants from South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa were interviewed face-to-face between 24 September 2015 and 24 April 2016. Relative to their co-religionists in the other nations, UK Muslims had a slightly above average attachment to their country of residence and a below average perception of widespread discrimination existing against them. They had certainly experienced somewhat lower levels of discrimination during the previous five years, especially on the grounds of ethnic or immigrant background. The published report on Muslims can be found at:

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-muslims-selected-findings>

An interactive search tool for the whole dataset is at:

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-second-eu-minorities-discrimination-survey?mdq1=dataset>

Islamic State (1)

The public has mixed views about what precisely should be done with the estimated 850 Britons who have fought as jihadists with Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria, but the majority is clear in not wanting to see them back home. This is according to an online survey of 2,007 UK adults by Opinium Research on 27-30 November 2017, following on from comments by a Foreign Office minister (Rory Stewart) that, in most instances, the best course of action would be to kill them. A plurality of respondents (42%) wished to see the Government strip the British jihadists of their citizenship and prevent them returning to the UK, while 35% wanted them treated as enemy combatants and thus as legitimate targets for attack. However, when Stewart's comments were quoted, 62% agreed with them, 18% dissenting. In other questions, 84% accepted that the British jihadists were, indeed, legitimate targets and 77% that they could never be reintegrated into UK society. When it was suggested that the UK could be considered to be as bad as ISIS if the Government pursued a strategy of killing British jihadists rather than imprisoning them, only 29% agreed with the proposition, 46% disagreed, and 24% were neutral or unsure. Full data tables, disaggregated by an extensive range of variables, can be found at:

<http://opinium.co.uk/government-british-jihadists/>

Islamic State (2)

Perhaps in reflection of the defeats suffered by ISIS on the battlegrounds of Iraq and Syria, United States President Donald Trump (33%) is now perceived by Scots as the greatest threat to international security, one point ahead of Islamic terrorism, with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in third place (18%). This is according to a poll by Survation for the *Sunday Post*, conducted among an online sample of 1,006 adults aged 16 and over in Scotland on 1-5 December 2017. By far the highest proportions selecting Islamic terrorism as the greatest threat were found among Conservative voters (43%) and those who had voted for the UK to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum (42%). Further information is contained in table 55 of the survey report at:

<http://survation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Final-Sunday-Post-Tables-301117APT-1.pdf>

Paranormal

Belief in aspects of the paranormal was tested by YouGov in three app-based polls conducted during December 2017, for which topline data only are available.

Asked whether it is possible to see or hear or feel a ghost, a plurality (44%) of Britons replied in the affirmative, with 41% disagreeing and 15% unsure. See:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/12/18/ghosts-confidence-political-judgement-royal-wedding/>

When it came to unidentified flying objects (UFOs), one-half of adults said they would approve of the UK government having a programme to investigate UFO sightings, comparable with the one run by the US Pentagon between 2007 and 2012. Opposition to the idea stood at 39% with 11% undecided. See:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/12/19/tracking-ufos-attempting-world-record-volunteering/>

Even more, 71%, were confident that there are non-human life forms existing somewhere in outer space, with 11% emphatic there are not and 17% uncertain. See:

<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2017/12/13/responsibility-online-extremist-content-banning-mo/>

FAITH ORGANIZATION STUDIES

UK Church Statistics

By far the most important new religious statistical source this month is *UK Church Statistics 3, 2018 Edition*, edited by Peter Brierley (Tonbridge: ADBC Publishers, 2017, ISBN: 978-0-9957646-1-3, £28, paperback). It comprises 18 sections, the first 12 of which relate to the number of members, churches, and ministers in the UK for 257 denominations (collated into ten groups) for every year between 2012 and 2017, with a forecast through to 2022. These figures derive from a request sent to each denomination in mid-2016 supplemented by websites and estimates by Brierley. Notwithstanding membership growth in two-thirds of denominations, the overall trend remains one of decline (of 7% for the whole UK between 2012 and 2017 and 17% for Scotland alone), with 9.4% of the population a church member in 2017. Of the remaining sections in the book, special interest attaches to 22 pages of detailed tables and maps from the Scottish church census of 2016; and 10 pages of reworked tables of English church census data back to 1980. There are also five reprinted essays by Brierley on specific aspects of the UK religious scene and a miscellany of other religious and social statistics. All in all, despite an occasional reservation, the volume is an impressive achievement. For a fuller content description and ordering information, go to:

<http://www.brierleyconsultancy.com/growth-decline-1>

Christian charities

The top ten Christian charities in the UK have a combined annual income of almost £521 million, according to an analysis by Charity Financials. The list, which is headed by the Salvation Army Trust on £209 million, is somewhat curious. The figures do not seem to add up, and, since there appear to be many obvious omissions, it remains unclear what criteria were used to identify the big-hitting Christian charities. The analysis is available at:

<http://www.charityfinancials.com/charity-financials-insider/income-of-uks-top-10-christian-charities-exceeds-05-billion-1742.html>

Unionized clergy

The Times (4 December 2017, p. 11) reported that almost 1,500 individuals have now joined the faith workers branch of the trade union Unite. This is an increase of nearly 200, or 16%, on

the year before. The majority (54%) of the branch's members are from the Church of England (who have their own workplace grouping within the branch, Church of England Clergy Advocates), with a further 10% Methodists (who likewise have a workplace grouping, the Association of Methodist Faith Workers), but rabbis and imams have also started to join. Even so, a comparatively small proportion of faith workers in the UK are unionized, at least via Unite. This is despite the fact that many have the legal status of office holders, rather than employees, and thus may be more likely to require independent advice and representation. According to Peter Brierley, the number of Christian ministers in the UK is actually increasing somewhat, and now exceeds 40,000.

Church growth, Anglo-Catholic style

Part A of Tim Thorlby's *A Time to Sow: Anglican Catholic Church Growth in London* (London: Centre for Theology and Community, 2017, 96pp.) showcases seven examples of recent Anglican church growth in the Dioceses of London and Southwark, all in Anglo-Catholic parishes serving deprived areas. Part B contains summative reflections on church growth arising from the research. The report is available at:

<http://www.theology-centre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CTC-Research-Report-9-A-Time-To-Sow-2017online.pdf>

Disestablishment

The National Secular Society's latest report, *Separating Church and State: The Case for Disestablishment*, includes, at pp. 10-11, an historical overview of public opinion towards the disestablishment of the Church of England. It can be downloaded from:

<https://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/separating-church-and-state.pdf>

ACADEMIC STUDIES

Secularization

A special theme issue of *Journal of Religious History* (Vol. 41, No. 4, December 2017) is devoted to 'New Perspectives on Secularisation in Britain (and beyond)', guest-edited by David Nash and William Gibson. It comprises an introduction by Gibson (pp. 431-8) followed by five research articles, by Callum Brown on atheism (pp. 439-56), Stefan Fisher-Høyrem on the Victorian public sphere (pp. 457-75 – a distinctly odd piece), Dominic Erdozain on the origins of European doubt (pp. 476-504), David Nash on secularization narratives (pp. 505-31), and John Wolffe on London since the 1960s (pp. 532-49). The authors mostly engage with secularization at a theoretical and intellectual level, with Charles Taylor's work often foregrounded, but Wolffe's article has significant empirical interest, demonstrating (he suggests) a quantitative and qualitative religious resurgence in the capital, originating in the 1960s and 1970s and gathering momentum around 2000. Although this was mainly rooted in the growth of Pentecostalism, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism, and most traditional Christian denominations continued to experience net decline, even here there were instances of expansion and effective new activity. For options to access this issue, go to:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jorh.2017.41.issue-4/issuetoc>

Religious diversity

A special theme issue of *Journal of Beliefs and Values* (Vol. 38, No. 3, 2017) on relations between Abrahamic religions includes two articles reporting additional findings from the Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project of 2011-12, conducted among 11,809 13- to 15-year-olds attending state-maintained schools in the UK. Tania ap Siôn, 'Seeing how We See Each Other: Learning from Quantitative Research among Young People in the UK' (pp. 305-17) concludes that: 'students who are themselves religiously motivated hold more positive attitudes towards religious diversity; there is no evidence that schools with a religious character produce students who are less-accepting of people from other religious faiths; religious education does work in the sense of leading to attitudes that promote community cohesion, lessen religious conflict and promote the common good.' Leslie Francis and Ursula McKenna, 'Assessing Attitude toward Religious Diversity among Muslim Adolescents in the UK: The Effect of Religious and Theological Factors' (pp. 328-40) uses regression analysis to demonstrate that theological factors (measured on the Astley-Francis Theology of Religions Index) account for much more variance than religious factors in explaining individual differences in Muslim students' attitudes towards religious diversity. For options to access these articles, go to:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cjbv20/38/3?nav=tocList>

Bertelsmann Foundation Religion Monitor, 2017

The Bertelsmann Foundation has completed the third in a series of international Religion Monitors, this one focusing on Muslims. Fieldwork was conducted towards the end of 2016 with representative samples of the general population and of Muslims in each of five European countries: Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Great Britain (where approximately 1,000 adults and 500 Muslims were interviewed). Initial findings have been published in a 15-page report written by Yasemin El-Menouar, *Muslims in Europe: Integrated but Not Accepted? Results and Country Profiles* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation, 2017). Muslims in Britain were differentiated from the rest of society by their relative youth (their average age being 38 years versus 49 years for the national cross-section) and their significantly greater religiosity (98% self-rating as highly or moderately religious compared with 57% of Britons generally). Other indicators of social distance between Muslims and non-Muslims in Britain were that: no more than 68% of Muslims had regular contact with non-Muslims in their leisure time; just 20% of Muslims felt an exclusive connection with Britain (with a further 68% having a dual allegiance to Britain and their country of origin); 42% of Muslims claimed to have experienced discrimination in the previous year; and 21% of non-Muslims objected to Muslims as neighbours (against merely 4% opposed to Jews as neighbours, 3% to atheists, and 1% to Christians). The report is available at:

https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Study_LW_Religion-Monitor-2017_Muslims-in-Europe_Results-and-Country-Profiles.pdf

British Religion in Numbers

A further update of the British Religion in Numbers (BRIN) source database has just taken place. New entries have been created for 103 British religious statistical sources, 73 of them from 2017, and 16 existing entries have been augmented, mostly by additional bibliographical references. The total of sources described in the database now stands at 2,739, disproportionately sample surveys. Sources can be browsed at:

<http://www.brin.ac.uk/source-list/>

An advanced search facility is available at:

<http://www.brin.ac.uk/search/>

Educating late Hanoverian Anglican clergy

In *The Education of the Anglican Clergy, 1780-1839* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017, x + 272pp., ISBN: 978-1-78327-175-7, £70, hardback), Sara Slinn offers a prosopographical study of the educational backgrounds of men ordained to the Anglican ministry in the late Hanoverian period, which was largely before the establishment of theological colleges. She demonstrates that the clergy of this era were socially, culturally, and educationally a more diverse group than has been previously recognised, with significant numbers of non-graduates. Extensive reliance is placed on quantitative data, mined from the Clergy of the Church of England Database, ordination application papers in diocesan archives, and ordination lists in contemporary periodicals and newspapers. The book's webpage is at:

<https://boydellandbrewer.com/the-education-of-the-anglican-clergy-1780-1839-hb.html>

NEW DATASETS AT UK DATA SERVICE

SN 6614: Understanding Society, Waves 1-7, 2009-2016 and Harmonised British Household Panel Survey, Waves 1-18, 1991-2009

This is not a new dataset *per se* but a major step forward in integrating access to pre-existing resources. For the first time in the study's history, data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) have been harmonized with those from Understanding Society to create 25 years of longitudinal data for the UK. BHPS started in 1991 and followed the same representative sample of individuals over an 18-year period. In 2009, BHPS participants were invited to consider joining the new, bigger, and more wide-ranging survey called Understanding Society. This merged longitudinal dataset naturally has many advantages over traditional cross-sectional surveys in tracking over-time changes in attitudes and beliefs among a very large sample. During the lifetimes of BHPS and Understanding Society, various religion-related questions have been asked, including about religious affiliation, attendance at religious services, and the difference made by religious beliefs to everyday life. BRIN readers can explore further via the catalogue record and documentation at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=6614&type=Data%20catalogue>

SN 8294: Community Life Survey, 2016-17

This is the fifth annual wave of the Community Life Survey (CLS), initiated by the Cabinet Office in 2012-13 to carry forward some of the questions in the discontinued Citizenship Survey; responsibility for the CLS currently rests with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport. Fieldwork for this wave was undertaken by Kantar Public (formerly TNS BMRB) between 10 August 2016 and 31 March 2017, online interviews or postal questionnaires being completed by 10,256 adults aged 16 and over in England (being a response rate of 21%). Besides demographics, the interview schedule explored identity and social networks, community, civic engagement, volunteering, social action, and subjective wellbeing. More specifically, respondents were asked about their religion and whether they practised it, the proportion of their friends drawn from the same religious group, their participation in and volunteering for religious groups, and their charitable giving to religious causes. A full catalogue description of the dataset, with links to supporting documentation, can be found at:

<https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=8294&type=Data%20catalogue>